

With the memory of the BP Deepwater Horizon spill still fresh, many on the Gulf Coast are still suffering, and the long-term effects still remain unknown. We must keep in mind that this was not our country's first incident at the hands of big oil.

Today marks the 22nd anniversary of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. The Valdez oil tanker was on its way to Long Beach, California when it struck the Prince William Sound's Bligh Reef. The collision breached the Valdez's hull and spilled eleven million gallons of crude oil into the ocean.

At the time, it was hard to not be moved by the pictures of eagles, fish, and dolphins colored black with oil. Our perception of oil changed that day. With one voice, Americans called for justice. We took to action. We demanded a resolution.

On April 20, 2010, when the BP *Deepwater Horizon* rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico. The decimated well poured 205 million barrels of crude oil into the waters of the Gulf and claimed the lives of eleven men. Americans watched on television and live webcams as gallons of oil spewed out and plan after plan failed. We waited three months for a solution that continued to evade us. In that time, ecosystems collapsed, several states' fishing and tourism industries died, and faith in the federal government's ability to respond to natural disasters eroded. For three months, we were reminded daily of the same feelings, promises, and demands from 22 years earlier.

Even almost a year after the BP spill, we continue to feel the consequences. Doctors in the Gulf are still diagnosing new respiratory, nervous, and digestive system failures due to exposure to volatile chemicals during and after the spill. Tourism and fishing business are still struggling. Oil spills always had and always will have human consequences.

It would not be accurate to say that no progress has been made in the past two decades. The *E* *xxon Valdez* spill highlighted the need for stronger regulation and led directly to the *Oil Pollution Act of 1990*, which helped to guide the response capabilities and responsibilities during the BP oil spill.

We can also take some comfort knowing that the federal government has helped industry develop renewable energy for commercial use. For example, federal spending for renewable energy research and development has increased to 16 percent of the energy research and development total.

Recently, Congress has enacted several major energy laws establishing, expanding, and modifying energy efficiency and renewable energy research, development, demonstration, and deployment programs, such as the *Energy Policy Act of 2005*, the *Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007*, the *Energy Improvement and Extension Act* enacted as part of the *Emergency Economic Stabilization Act*, and the *American Reinvestment and Recovery Act*. The *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*, in particular, secured more than \$60 billion for clean energy investments, including \$6.3 billion for state and local efforts in renewable energy and energy efficiency, and \$500 million for jobs training to help prepare workers for careers in energy efficiency and renewable energy.

I am proud of this work we have done and the progress our country has made. Yet, there is no escaping the fact that oil still accounts for 40 percent of our energy needs. Though differing in the details, the BP *Deepwater Horizon* spill is a lecture in the same lesson as the *Exxon Valdez*: our country has an unhealthy dependence on fossil fuels. On the anniversary of the *Exxon Valdez* spill, and as we approach the one-year anniversary of the BP *Deepwater Horizon* spill, we must remember the lessons of the past as we plan for our future.